









Hooker Mayor.

Jovis xxvii. die *Augusti*, 1674. Annoq;
Regni Regis CAROLI Secundi
Angliæ, &c. xxvi.

OR D E R E D by this Court, That
Mr. Sharpe be desired to Print his
Sermon Preached on Sunday last before
the Lord Mayor and Aldermen of this
City, at the Guild-Hall Chappel.

WAGSTAFFE.

Imprimatur,

Sept. 11. 74.

Guliel. Wigan, *Rev. in Ch.*
Pat. ac D°. D°. Humf.
Episc. Lond. in Sac. Dom.

The Things that make for Peace.

DELIVERED IN A
S E R M O N

Preached before the Right Honourable

THE

Lord Mayor,

AND THE

Court of ALDERMEN,

AT

GUILD-HALL CHAPPEL,

Upon the 23. of *August*, 1674.

By *JOHN SHARPE*, Chaplain to the Right
Honourable Heneage Lord Finch, Lord Keeper of
the Great Seal of England.

L O N D O N,

Printed by *Andrew Clark* for *Walter Kettilby*, at the
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To the Right Honourable,
S^r William Hooker,
LORD MAYOR of LONDON,
And to the
COURT of ALDERMEN.

Right Honourable,



He following Discourse was never designed to go further than your own Chappel, otherwise it had not been left so Imperfect : but since you have thought fit to Order it should be more Publick, it would ill become me, who do in it so earnestly Press Obedience to Superiors, to dispute your Commands. Such therefore as it is, I humbly Present it to you, heartily wishing it may in some

The Epistle Dedicatory.

*some degree Minister to the Promoting
Peace and Unity and Brotherly Love
among us, which is the onely thing there-
in aimed at by*

RIGHT HONORABLE,

Your most Humble and

Obedient Servant,

JOHN SHARPE.

Rom.

Let us therefore follow after the things
that make for Peace.

R O M. xiv. 19.

*Let us therefore follow after the things
that make for Peace.*



THE *Apostles* design in this *Chapter*, is to perswade the *Roman* Christians to live *Peaceably* one with another, notwithstanding all their different *Perswasions* in matters of *Religion*.

He doth not so much set himself to *Resolve* their *Controversies*, to *Determine* which *Side* held the Truest *Opinions*, as to *Silence* their *Disputes*, to allay those *Bitternesses* and *Animosities* with which the several *Parties* prosecuted each other, to oblige them to *embrace* one another in *Christian Charity*; and though there could not be an *Unity* of *Judgment* among them; (which certainly is a thing can never be expected; mens apprehensions concerning things being necessarily almost as various as are their *Tempers* and *Complexions*;) yet nevertheless they should so order the matter, that there might at least be an *Unity* of *Affection*, and an amicable communication one with another.

He represents to them that they had nothing to *do* to *Judge* or *Censure* their *Brethren*; for they were

Gods Servants, and to *Him* only they stood or fell ; that though they were *mistaken* in their Notions as to the Points in Controversie, yet nevertheless, if what was done upon those *mistaken* Principles, was done out of a pure heart, and as in obedience to the Commands of God , it would be accepted of him.

Ver. 13, 14,
15.

He is so far from countenancing their *Religious Quarrels*, that he adviseth even those that held the true side of the Question, to submit for *Peace* sake, and rather to *recede* from their *right* ; to forbear doing that which they might lawfully do, than by undue use of their *Liberty* to cast a *Stumbling-block* before the weak uninstructed Dissenters, and be a means of their forsaking Christianity.

Ver. 17.

And the more to enforce this discourse, he assures them, that however they might pretend *Religion* for their present differences, yet in truth *That* was of all other things the least interested in them. They were much mistaken in the nature of *it*, if they took it to consist in such small, inconsiderable, external things as they made the matter of their *Dissensions*. *Christianity* was not much concerned, whether they ate such kind of *Meats*, or whether they did not eat them ; whether they kept *Sabbaths* and *New-moons* holy to the Lord, or whether they esteemed every day alike. *That* was a more *inward*, and a more *noble* thing. It was the hearty practice of *Righteousness* and *Peace*, and *Rejoicing to do good*. These were the things that made
a man.

a man a *Christian*; and in *These things* (saith the *Apostle*) *he that serveth Christ is indeed acceptable to God, and approved of men.* Ver. 18.

And then at last from these several *Particulars* he draws this *general Inference* by way of *Exhortation*: *Let us therefore follow after the things that make for peace.*

I have given you a brief account of the *Apostles* discourse in this *Chapter*; and I could heartily wish that I had no occasion to deal any further upon this Subject. Happy were it for *Christians*, if things were in that posture among them, that they were no further concerned in these Discourses of Scripture, than only to be instructed in the sense of them. But, alas, whoever understands any thing of the state of *Christianity*, now for these many Ages in the World, will easily see that no one Point of our *Religion* has been in all times more necessary to be daily preached, to be earnestly pressed, to be loudly sounded in the ears of Christians than this of *Peace* and *Love*, and mutual sufferance under their different *apprehensions* of *Religion*.

It has fared (as one hath observed) with *Chri-* Mr. Hales.
stianity in this matter as it did with the *Jewish* Dispensation of old. The great and *principal* Commandment which God gave the *Jews*, and which (as they themselves teach) was the *Foundation* of all their *Law*, was to *worship* the *God of Israel*, and *Him* only to *serve*: yet such was the sottishness and perverseness of that *People*, that *This* was the Com-
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mandment

mandment, that of all others they could never be obliged to keep ; but they were continually running a whoring after the *Gods* of the *Nations*, notwithstanding all the various ways and methods that God made use of to reclaim them from that sin. What the *Worship* of *one God* was to the *Jews*, that *Peace*, and *Love*, and *Unity* is to the *Christians*, even the *grand* distinguishing *Law* and *Character* of their *Profession* : and yet with *sorrow*, and to our unspeakable *confusion* it may be spoken, There is no *Religion* that ever was known in the World hath given Birth to so many *Heresies*, hath been intituled to so many needless Disputes and Quarrels, hath been crumbled into so many *Sects* and *Parties*, hath been prosecuted by all the several *Pretenders* to it with so much heat and fury, and implacable animosity, hath been made the occasion of so much Tumult, War, and Bloudshed, as this excellent, this innocent, and gall-less *Religion* of ours.

To go no further than our selves, and the posture we stand in at this day ; if ever any *Society* of *Christians* could be obliged to live in Brotherly *Love* and *Communion* with one another we certainly are the Men. For besides the engagements of our *Religion*, common to us with other *Christians*, we have all the external advantages which a wise and well temper'd Settlement of *Church-affairs*, a mild and just *Government*, and excellent *Laws* can give to the promoting thereof.

Religion is established among us in as great Purity as ever perhaps it was since the *Apostles* times.

The *Government* we live under is neither so *Lax* as to defeat its own ends, nor so *Severe* as to exercise Tyranny over our Consciences.

The *Terms* of our *Communion* are more large, and moderate, and easie to be submitted to by men of different *Perswasions*, than any other *Church-Society* that I know of doth allow at this day. And this is so acknowledged, that there is scarce any of the several disagreeing *Parties* among us, but next to their *own Church* would prefer *Ours* before all Others.

The *Doctrins* that make up our publick *Confession* are expressed in such a *latitude*, that they have been, and are generally assented to, by most of the *Dissenters* from us. And that wherein *We* differ from others, is not our *adding* to the *Faith* new and questionable *Doctrins*, but our *rejecting*, or not *imposing* their *Innovations*.

Our *Publick Service* hath not a *Prayer* in it but what any Christian in the World may lawfully say *Amen* to.

Our *Ceremonies* are but few, and those very decent, and unquestionably of *Primitive Antiquity*.

The *Penalties* which the *Laws* inflict upon those that separate from our *Communion* are so easie, and so moderate, that methinks *Sober* men should be ashamed to call them *Persecutions*; and should rather

rather sit down contentedly under them, than by endeavouring, or desiring any *Alteration*, endanger the bringing the *Church*, and possibly *themselves* into far greater inconveniencies than those they now suffer.

In a word, so excellent is the temper of our present *Settlement*, that there is no *Church* in the World, with which men of differing *Perswasions* may more safely communicate; and under which, even *Dissenters*, if they be peaceable, may live more happily than the *Church of England*.

But now how do we demean our selves under this happy Constitution of affairs? What *Fruits* of the *Gospel of Peace* do we yield suitable to these great external Advantages? One might rationally expect to see *Religion* in quite another *Face* among us, than it hath in other parts of the World; and that enjoying such excellent means of *Peace* and *Unity* as we do; and especially having sufficiently experienced the Miseries of *Discord*; there should no such thing as *Faction* or *Division* be heard of among us, but that we should All like *Brethren* Christianly joyn together with our *Common Mother*, and in smaller matters bear with one anothers Weaknesses, and Ignorances, and Mistakes, as doubtless *God* himself will; and as the *Church*, which is principally concern'd, in many cases doth.

But alas! the event doth too notoriously discover the contrary to all this, and that to the shame
of

of our selves, and the reproach of our Church, and the scandal of Religion, and the rejoicing of our Enemies, and the grief of all good men.

Never were our *Differences* higher, our *Oppositions* one of another more violent, our *Schisms* and *Separations* more numerous, and more obstinate than they are at this day.

We dispute eternally, we quarrel without grounds, and without measure; we stickle for every *Trifle*, and are as much concerned for the propagating a silly *Notion*, which might very well be let alone without our being a jot the worse Christians as if the *Fundamentals* of our *Religion* lay at stake.

We revile, we reproach, we bespatter one another; and though we be extremely *scrupulous* in smaller matters, yet we make no *scruple* of sacrificing *charity*, and the *Churches peace* to every *humour*, and every *passion*. And whilest we are zealous in the matter of an *Opinion*, or a small Ceremony; we often lose all sense of Religion, and Good manners, and even Humanity it self.

What the Consequences of these unreasonable and unchristian *Feuds* may be, we know not. I pray God they do not end, either in a very great *Corruption*, or a total *Subversion* of *Christianity* among us. It was these *sins*, if it be lawful to guess at the reason of Gods Judgments from outward Appearances, that brought desolation upon those once flourishing *Churches* of *Afric* and *Asia*: and
who

who knows, if they be obstinately persisted in, but they may be an occasion of *Gods removing his Candlestick* from us also.

And now is it not needful that every *Christian* should use his utmost endeavour to *still* that *Spirit of Contention* that is gone forth among us? Is it not needful that every *Son of Peace* should bring some *water* to the quenching of our *Flames*?

Let me therefore this day take up *St. Pauls* exhortation to you; let me beseech you, let me conjure you; *if there be any Consolation in Christ, if any Comfort of Love, if any Fellowship of the Spirit, if any Bowels and Mercies*, that now at length laying aside all *bitterness* and *evil speaking*, all *variance* and *emulation*, all needless *Disputes* and *Contentions*, you would unanimously joyn together in *following after the things that make for peace*.

And that my *Exhortation* may be the more effectual to the purposes I intend it for, I shall pursue it; *First* by way of *Direction*; *Secondly* by way of *Motive*. *First* I shall reduce the *Duty* here enjoyned of *Following the things that make for peace* to its *particular Rules* and *Instances*, that you may know what is to be done by you in order to the performance of it.

Secondly I shall set before you the very great *Engagements* and *Obligations* that lie upon us to *follow after the things that make for peace*; that you may be perswaded the more vigorously to set about it.

And

And both these things I shall manage as near as I can with respect to the present *state* and *posture* of *Affairs* among us, and withal shall alwayes remember that my business is not to prescribe *Laws* or *Rules* to my *Superiors* for their Carriage in these matters, but only to represent the Duty that Christians of a *private capacity* do owe to the *Publick*, and to one another.

* As for the *First* thing, which is, to *direct* and *instruct* you in the performance of this duty of *following the things that make for peace*, you may be pleased to take notice, That this Duty hath a twofold Object, according to the two different Relations and Capacities in which we are to be considered; to wit, the *Church* our *Mother*, and *Particular Christians* our *Brethren*. In the *first* Relation we are considered as *Subjects*; in the *second* as *Fellow-Christians*. With respect to the *former*, the *Peace* we are to pursue implies *Obedience*, and *Preservation of Communion*, in opposition to *Schism* and *Separation*. With respect to the *latter*, it implies *mutual Love* and *Charity*, in opposition to *Quarrels* and *Contentions*.

My business therefore upon this *first* head is to shew what are the *Particulars* of our *Duty*, what are the means that conduce to *Peace* in both these respects.

And first of all I begin with what is due from us to the *Church* in order to *Peace*, as *Peace* stands in contradistinction to *Schism*. And this Point I shall

beg leave to discuss, very freely, and very particularly ; because I fear we have generally many false *Notions* about it ; and yet it is a matter of such consequence, that I doubt not but the right understanding of it would go a great way to the *Cure* of the sad *Divisions* that are among us.

And that I may discourse with more clearness, and more evidence, I shall deliver what I have to say in this matter, by way of *Propositions*; taking my Rise from the *first Principle* of Church-Society, and so regularly ascending.

The *first Proposition* I lay down is this ; *That every Christian upon the very account of his being so, is a Member of the Church of Christ, and is bound to joyn in External Communion with it where it can be had.*

For the clearing of this you may be pleased to consider that the Primary Design and Intention of our Saviour in his undertaking for us was not to save *particular persons* without respect to a *Society*, but to gather to himself a *Church* out of *Mankind*, to erect and form a *Body Politick*, of which himself was the *Head*, and particular Christians the *Members* : and in this method through *Obedience* to his *Laws* and *Government* to bring men to *Salvation*.

And this is no more than what is the Sense and Language of the *Holy Scriptures* ; wherein whatever Christ is said to have *done* or *suffered* for *Mankind*, he is said to have done for them, not as *Scattered*

tered Individuals, but as Incorporated into a Church.

Thus Christ loved the Church, and gave himself for Eph. 5. 25.

it. Christ redeemed the Church with his own Blood. Acts 20. 28.

Christ is the Saviour of his Body, that is to say the Church, with many passages of the like importance. Eph. 5. 23.

The plain Consequence from hence is, that every person, so far as he is a *Christian*, so far he is a *Member* of the *Church* ; and by virtue of that Relation to the *Church* it is, that he hath any relation to *Christ*, or any Title to the *Privileges* of the *Gospel*.

And agreeably to this Notion, it is very plain, that *Baptism*, which is by all acknowledged to be the *Ceremony* of Initiating us into *Christianity*, is in Scripture declared to be the *Rite* whereby we are entred and admitted into the *Church*. Thus St. Paul expressly tells us, that *by one Spirit we are all baptized into one Body*. And again, that *Christ hath sanctified*, that is to say, separated *his Church by the washing of Water and the Word*. I Cor. 12. 13. Eph. 5. 26.

Now then it being thus evident, that every Christian as a *Christian* is a *Member* of that *Body* of *Christ* which we call the *Church* : there will be little need of taking pains to prove, that every such person is obliged to joyn in *External Communion* with the *Church* where he can do so : for the very nature of this *Church-membership* doth imply it. Without this neither the *Ends* of *Church-Society*, nor the *Benefits* accruing to us therefrom can be attained.

First, not the *Ends* of it : The *Ends* of Church-Society are the more *Solemn Worship* of God, and the Publick Profession of our *Religion*, and the Mutual Edification one of another : Now how these can be in any measure attained without associating together in *Publick Assemblies*, and mutual *Offices*, and other *Acts* of *External Communion* with one another cannot any ways be imagined.

And as little in the second place, can it be conceived how without this we can be made partakers of the Benefits and Privileges that *Christ* hath made over to the *Members* of his *Church*. For we are to consider that God hath so ordered the matter, and without doubt for this very reason to unite us the more firmly in *Society*, that the Privileges of the *Gospel*, such as Pardon of Sin, and the Grace of the Holy Spirit, are not ordinarily conveyed to us so immediately by *God*, but that there must intervene the *Ministry* of *Men*. Gods holy *Word* and *Sacraments* are the Channels in which they are derived to us ; and *Those* to whom he hath committed the *Ministry* of *Reconciliation* and the *Power* of the *Keyes* are the *Hands* that must dispence them. We have no promise of *Spiritual Graces* but by these means : so that in order to the partaking of them there is an absolute necessity laid upon us of joyning and communicating with the *Church*.

It is true indeed God doth not so tie himself up to these *means*, but that he can, and will in some cases confer the Benefits of them without them :

as in case of a *General Apostacy* of the *Church*; or of *Persecution* for *Religion*; or of an unjust *Ex-communication*, or any other case where Communion with a *true Visible Church* is denied to us. But though God doth act *extraordinarily* in *extraordinary* cases, where these *means* cannot be had; yet this doth not at all diminish, much less take away the necessity of making use of *them* when they can be had.

From what hath been discoursed on this *first Proposition*, we may by the way gather these two things: I only name them. *First* how untrue their *Position* is that maintain that all our Obligation to Church Communion doth arise from a voluntary admission of our selves into some Particular Congregation, and an explicit Promise or Ingagement to joyn with it in Church Ordinances.

2. How wildly and extravagantly they discourse that talk of a *Christianity at large*, without relation to a Church, or communion with any Society of *Christians*.

The *second Proposition* is, *That every one is bound to joyn in Communion with the established National Church to which he belongs, supposing there be nothing in the Terms of its Communion that renders it unlawful for him so to do.*

For if we are bound to maintain Communion with the Catholick Church, as I have before proved, it is plain that we are bound to maintain Communion with that part of it, within whose Verge

Verge the Divine Providence has cast us. For we cannot communicate with the Catholick Church but by communicating with some Part of it : and there is no communicating with any Part of it, but That under which we live, or where we have our Residence.

Well, but it may be said, that there may be several Distinct Churches in the Place where we live. There may be the fixed Regular Assemblies of the National Church ; and there may be Separate Congregations ; both which are, or pretend to be *Parts* of the Catholick Church ; so that it may be all one as to our communicating with *that*, which of *these* we joyn with, supposing we joyn but with one of them ; and consequently there is no necessity from *that* Principle, that we should hold Communion with the *Publick Assemblies* of the *National Church*.

But as to this I desire it may be considered, that That that lays an Obligation upon us to joyn in Communion with the *Church* (to wit our being *Members* of that *one Body of Christ*) doth also lay an Obligation upon us, as much as in us lies to preserve the *Unity* of *that Body*, (for this both the *Fundamental Laws* of *Society*, and the expresse Precepts of *Christianity* do require of every *Member* :) But now to make a *Rent* in, or *separate* from any *Part* of the *Body of Christ*, with which we may lawfully communicate (and such we now suppose the *Established Assemblies* of the *Nation* to be) is directly

directly contrary to the preserving the *Unity* of *that Body*: And therefore certainly such a *Rent* or *Separation* must be unlawful. And if so, then it must be unlawful also to joyn with any *Congregation* of men among us that have made such a *Rent* or *Separation*.

So that let our Pretences be what they will, so long as the *Fixed Regular Assemblies* of the *Nation* wherein we live, do truly belong to the *Catholick Church*, and we can lawfully joyn with them, it is certain we are bound so to do, and not to joyn with those *Congregations* that have withdrawn themselves from *them*: for to do this would be to joyn in *Society* with *Separatists*, would be a partaking with their *Sin*, and a breach of the *Apostles* Precept of *Avoiding those that cause Divisions*.

Rom. 16. 17.

The *third Proposition* is, *That the being a Member of any Church doth oblige a man to submit to all the Laws and Constitutions of that Church*.

This Proposition is in the General so unquestionable, that no *sober* man will deny it. And indeed it is the *Basis* upon which all *Societies* are founded, and by which they do subsist. For to suppose a *Society*, and yet to suppose the *Members* of it not under an Obligation to obey its Laws and Government, is to make Ropes of Sand, to suppose a *Body* without *Sinews* and *Ligaments* to hold its parts together.

So that all the question here is concerning the nature and extent of the *Churches* Power over her

Members.

Members, How far, and in what instances she hath *Authority* to oblige them. Which is a question not difficult to be answered if men would come to it without passion and prejudice.

For it must be acknowledged, in the first place, that the *Church* must, as all other *Societies*, be entrusted with at least so much *power* over her *Subjects*, as is necessary for the securing her own *Welfare* and *Preservation* : For to think otherwise, is to suppose *God* to have founded a *Church*, and intended the *Well-being* and *Continuance* of it ; which are things that every one must grant : And yet to suppose that he hath denied her the use of the *Means* without which that *Well-being* and *Continuance* cannot be attained : which is monstrous and contradictory.

Furthermore it must be granted, that the *Welfare* and *Preservation* of the *Church* cannot be secured but upon these two Suppositions. *First*, That Provision be made for the *due* and *orderly* performance of the *Worship* of *God*. *Secondly*, That there be means of maintaining *Peace* and *Unity* among its *Members*. This latter is necessary to the *Welfare* and *Preservation* of a *Church*, as a *Society*, the former is necessary to it as a *Religious Society*.

Now then this being admitted, it follows in the general, that whatever *Power* over her *Subjects* is necessary in order to either of these things, all that at least must be supposed to be lodged in the *Church*, that is to say, in *Those* that have the *Government* of it.

So

So that from hence it is plain, in the *first* place, that the *Church* hath power so far to restrain the exercise of her *Subjects Liberty*, as to oblige them to all such *Laws, Rules, Orders, and Ceremonies* as She shall establish for the more Solemn, Regular, Decent, and Convenient Administration of *Religious Affairs*. And if it be questioned whether her *Appointments* do indeed conduce to that end, of that She her self is to be the *Judge*; Her Members being no farther concern'd therein, than one ly before they obey her *Impositions* to see that they be not repugnant to the known *Laws of God*. This Power the *Church* must be supposed to have, otherwise She will not be enabled to make Provision for the first thing whereon her *Welfare* doth depend: *viz.* the Performance of Gods Worship and Service in a *due and orderly* manner.

Secondly, from hence also it is plain, that the *Church* must be furnished with a Power to *end* and *determine* Controversies of *Religion* that arise among its *Members*: that is to say, to give such an *Authoritative* decision of them, as that all *Parties* are bound to acquiesce in it: for without this she would be defective in the *second* thing required to her *Welfare and Preservation*, *viz.* Maintaining her self in *Peace and Unity*.

But here it may be taken notice that this Power of *Ending Controversies*, which we ascribe to the *Church*, doth not imply any *Authority* over our *Judgments*; or that in vertue thereof she can ob-

lige us to give an *inward assent* to her *Determinations*, any further than she gives us evidence for the *Truth* of them : (which is that extravagant Power the *Church* of *Rome* doth challenge to her self) but onely an *Authority* over our *Practices*, that she can oblige us to submit so far to her *Definitions*, as not to *act* any thing contrary to them. A Power in the *former sense* is not necessary to the *Churches* peace ; and the reason is, because our *Judgments* and *Opinions*, so long as we keep them to our selves, cannot possibly cause any disturbance in, or do any injury to *Society*. But a Power in the *latter sense* is absolutely necessary ; for if men may be allowed to vent and publish what ever *fancies* come into their heads, and the *Church* have no *Authority* to impose silence upon them, it cannot be avoided but she will be overrun with *Heresies*, and embroiled in infinite *Quarrels* and *Controversies*, to the destruction of her Publick Peace.

The *fourth Proposition* is, *That we can have no just cause of with-drawing our Communion from the Church whereof we are Members, but when we cannot communicate with it without the Commission of a Sin.*

For if we are bound to Communicate with the *Church* when we can lawfully do so ; as hath been before proved, it is plain we are bound so long to *continue* our Communion with the *Church*, till it be unlawful to continue in it any longer : But it cannot be unlawful to continue in her Communion, till

till she require something as a Condition of her Communion that is a *Sin*.

So that there are but *Two* cases, wherein it can be lawful to *withdraw* our *Communion* from a *Church*; because there are but two cases wherein *Communion* with her can be *sinful*. One is, when the *Church* requires of us as a *Condition* of her *Communion*, an *Acknowledgment* and *Profession* of that for a *Truth*, which we know to be an *Error*. The other is, when the *Church* requires of us as a *Condition* of her *Communion*, the joyning with her in some *Practises* which we know to be against the *Laws* of *God*. In these two Cases to withdraw our Obedience to the *Church* is so far from being a *Sin*, that it is a necessary *Duty*; because we have an obligation to the *Laws* of *God* antecedent to that we have to *those* of the *Church*; and we are bound to obey *these* no further than they are consonant or agreeable to *those*.

But now from this discourse it will appear how insufficient those Causes, how unwarrantable those Grounds are, upon which many among us have proceeded to *Separation* from our *Church*.

For, *first* if what I have laid down be true, it cannot be true that *Unscriptural Impositions* can be a warrantable cause of *separation* from a *Church*; supposing that by *Unscriptural* be meant no more than onely what is neither *Commanded* nor *Forbidden* in the Scriptures. For the Actions required by these *Unscriptural Impositions* are either in them-

selves *lawful* to be done, or *not lawful* to be done. If they be in themselves *unlawful* to be done, then they do not fall under that notion of *Unscriptural* we here speak of ; they are down-right *Sins*, and so either *particularly* or in the *general* forbid in the *Scripture*. If they be in themselves *lawful* to be done, then it cannot be imagined how their being *commanded* can make them *unlawful* : So that in this case there is no *sin* in yielding obedience to the *Church*, and consequently no cause of withdrawing our Communion from it.

Nor *secondly* can it be true, that the Church requiring from us any *doubtful* or *suspected* practices as Conditions of her Communion, is a just cause of *Separation* : for we must have at least as much certainty of the *unlawfulness* of the *actions* enjoined as we have of our *Obligation* to the *Authority* that enjoins them, before we withdraw our *Obedience* to it, otherwise we do not proceed upon safe grounds ; but now we are *absolutely certain* that God hath commanded us to obey them that have the rule over us, but we are not *certain* that the *actions* we here speak of are any where *forbid* by him ; for if we were, they would be no longer *doubtful* or *suspected*, they would be *certain sins* : so that if we will follow the surer side, as all Christians in these cases are bound to do, we must continue our *Obedience* to the *Church*, notwithstanding we *suspect* or *doubt* of the lawfulness of her Commands.

Neither *thirdly* can it be true, that *Errors* in a *Church* as to matter of *Doctrins*, or *Corruptions* as to matter of *Practice*, so long as those *Errors* and *Corruptions* are onely *suffered*, but not *imposed*, can be a sufficient cause of *Separation*; the reason is, because these things are not *sins* in us, so long as we do not joyn with the *Church* in them. So that so long as we can Communicate with a *Church*, without either professing her *Errors*, or partaking in her *sinful Practices*, as in the present case it is supposed we may do; so long we are bound upon the *Principle* before laid down not to *separate* from her.

Neither in the *fourth* and last place, is the enjoying a more profitable *Ministry*; or living under a more pure *Discipline* in another *Church*, a just cause of forsaking the *Communion* of that whereof we are now *Members*. The reason is, because we are not to commit the least *crime* for the attaining the greatest good in the World: Now it is a *crime* to forsake the *Communion* of the *Church* whereof we are *Members*, so long as her *Communion* is not *sinful*: But the enjoyment of a *less profitable Ministry*, or a *less pure Discipline* doth not make her *Communion* *sinful*; therefore the enjoyment of a *more profitable Ministry*, or a *more pure Discipline* cannot make a *Separation* from her *lawful*.

The *fifth* and last *Proposition* is, *That though we have a just cause to refuse Communion with the Church whereof we are Members in some instances,*
yet

yet we are not therefore to proceed to so total a Separation from it as to erect New Churches in contradiction to it, or to joyn with those that do.

The reason is clear from the foregoing Principles ; viz. because we are bound to obey as far as we can, and where we cannot to suffer ; but at no hand to disturb the Peace, or break the Unity of the Church.

Though we cannot comply with all that the Church requires of us, yet still we must joyn with Her in those other things where we lawfully can.

Nay, though the Church should require those things as Conditions of her Communion so that unless we conform to them we cannot at all communicate with her ; yet still there is a Passive Obedience due from us : We must sit still and suffer, and not make a Rent in the Church by setting up one Altar against another.

This is like the setting up a new and a distinct Government in the Bowels of the State.

Nothing can justify such a degree of departure as this but onely one thing ; to wit, so great and general a Corruption of the Church both in Doctrine and Practice, that the Salvation of all that communicate with her is thereby endangered : Which though it be the condition of the Members of the present Church of Rome, yet I dare say few among us will affirm to be the case of them that communicate with the Church of England.

Thus have I as briefly as I could represented to you the Particulars of that Duty we owe to our *common Mother* in the *preservation* of her *Unity* and *Communion*. And I hope I have not been so zealous for *Peace* as to have been at all injurious to *Truth*.

I am confident I have said nothing but what is very agreeable to *Scripture* and *Reason*, and the sense of the Best and Ancientest *Christians*. And I am certain I have not intrenched upon any of those Grounds upon which our *Ancestors* proceeded to the *Reformation* of *Religion* among us. And for most of the things here delivered we have also the *suffrage* of several, and those the most learned and moderate of our *dissenting Brethren*.

And now if after this any one be offended, as indeed these kind of discourses are seldom very acceptable; all I can say, is this, That the *Truths* here delivered are really of so great importance to *Religion* and the *Public Peace*, that they ought not to be dissembled or suppressed, for any *bad reception* they may meet with from *some men*: but as for the *manner* of delivering them, I have taken all the care I could, not to give offence to any.

I now pass on to the *second* part of my *Task* upon this *Head*, which is to consider the *Duty* recommended in the *Text* with relation to *particular Christians* our *Brethren*.

And here my business is to direct you to the
Pursuit.

Pursuit of those things that make for Peace; as *Peace* signifies mutual *Love* and *Charity* in opposition to *Strife* and *Bitterness* and *Contentions*.

The things that make for *Peace*, in this sense are more especially these that follow, which I shall deliver by way of *Rules* and *Advices*.

The *first Rule* is to distinguish carefully between matters of *Faith*, and matters of *Opinion*; and as to these latter, to be willing that every one should enjoy the liberty of judging for himself.

This is one thing that would help very much to the extinguishing of those unnatural Heats and *Animosities*, which have long been the Reproach of Christians. If men would set no greater value upon their *Notions* and *Opinions* than they do deserve; if they would make a difference between *necessary* points, and those that are not so: and in those things that are not *necessary*, would not rigorously tie up others to their measures, but would allow every man to abound in his own sense, so long as the *Churches Peace* is not thereby injured, we should not have so many bitter Quarrels and Heart-burnings among us. But alas whilst every one will frame a *Système* of *Divinity* of his own head, and every puny *Notion* of that *Système* must be *Christen'd* by the name of an *Article* of *Faith*; and every man that doth not believe just as he doth, must straight be a *Heretick* for doing so: How can it be expected but we must wrangle eternally?

It were heartily to be wished that Christians would consider, that the *Articles of Faith*, those things that God hath made necessary by every one to be believed in order to his *Salvation*, are but *very few*, and they are all of them so *plainly* and *clearly* set down in the *Scripture*, that it is impossible for any sincere honest-minded man to miss of the *true sense* of them. And they have further this Badg to distinguish them from all other *Truths*, that they have an immediate influence upon mens *Lives*, a direct Tendency to make men *Better*; whereas most of those things that make the matter of our Controversies, and about which we make such a noise and clamour, and for which we so bitterly censure and anathematize one another, are quite of another nature: They are neither so *clearly revealed* or *propounded* in the *Scripture*, but that even good men through the great difference of their Parts, Learning, and Education may after their best endeavours vary in their sentiments about them. Nor do they at all concern a *Christian Life*, but are matters of pure *notion* and *speculation*. So that it cannot with any reason be pretended that they are *points* upon which Mens *Salvation* doth depend. It cannot be thought that God will be offended with any man for his *Ignorance* or *Mistakes* concerning them. And, if not, if a man may be a *Good Christian*, and go to Heaven whether he holds the right or the wrong side in these matters; for Gods sake why should we be *angry* with any

one for having other opinions about them than we have? Why should we not rather permit men to use their *Understandings* as well as they can, and where they fail of the *Truth* to bear with them, as *God* himself without question will; then by sticking for every impertinent unnecessary *Truth* destroy that *Peace*, and *Love*, and *Amity* that ought to be among *Christians*.

The second thing I would recommend, is a great *simplicity* and *purity* of *Intention* in the pursuit of *Truth*; and at no hand to let *passion* or *interest*, or any *self-end* be ingredient into our *Religion*.

The practice of this would not more conduce to the discovery of *Truth*, than it would to the promoting of *Peace*. For it is easie to observe that it is not always a pure concernment for the *Truth*, in the points in Controversie, that makes us so zealous, so fierce and so obstinate in our Disputes for or against them; but something of which that is onely the *Mask* and *Pretence*, some *By-ends* that must be served, some *Secular Interest* that we have espoused, which must be carried on.

We have either engaged our selves to some *Party*, and so its Interests right or wrong must be promoted: or we have taken up an opinion inconsiderately at the first, and appeared in the favour of it, and afterward our own credit doth oblige us to defend it: or we have received some *slight* or *disappointment* from the Men of *one way*, and

and so in pure pet and revenge we pass over to their Adversaries. Or it is for our gain and advantage, that the Differences among us be still kept afoot; or we desire to get our selves a name by some great *Atchievements* in the Noble Science of *Controversies*; or we are possessed with a spirit of Contradiction; or we delight in Novelties; or we love to be singular.

These are the things that too often both give birth to our Controversies; and also nourish and foment them.

If we would but cast these *Beams* out of our eyes, we should both see more *clearly*, and certainly live more *peaceably*. But whilst we pursue *base* and *sordid ends* under the pretence of maintaining *Truth*, we shall always be in *error*, and always in *contention*.

Let us therefore quit our selves of all our prepossessions; let us mortify all our *Pride* and *Vain-glory*, our *Passion* and *Emulation*, our *Covetousness* and *Revenge*; and bring nothing in the world to our *Debates* about Religion but onely the *pure love* of *Truth*: and then our Controversies will not be so long; and they will be more calmly and peaceably managed, and they will redound to the greater good of all *Parties*.

And this I dare say further to encourage you to labour after this temper of mind, That he that comes thus qualified to the study of *Religion*, though he may not have the luck always to light

on the *Truth*, yet with all his *errors* be they what they will, he is more acceptable to God than the Man that hath *Truth* on his side, yet takes it up or maintains it to serve a turn. He that believes a *Falsehood*, after he hath used his sincere endeavours to find the *Truth*, is not half so much a *Heritick* as he that professeth a *Truth* out of *Evil Principles*, and prostituteth it to *unworthy ends*.

The third Rule is, Never to quarrel about *Words* and *Phrases*, but so long as other men mean much what the same that we do, let us be content though they have not the luck to express themselves so well.

I do not know how it comes to pass, whether through too much heat and eagerness of disputing, that we do not mind one anothers *Sense*; or, whether through too much love to our own manner of *Thinking* or *Speaking*, that we will not endure any thing but what is conveyed to us in our own *Methods*. But, really, it often happens that most bitter Quarrels do commence, not so much from the different *Sense* of the contending Parties, concerning the things they contend about, as from their different *Terms* expressing the same *Sense*, and the different *Grounds* they proceed upon, or *Arguments* they make use of for the proof of it.

For my part I verily believe that this is the Case of several of those *Disputes*, in which we *Protestants* do often engage at this day. I do not think, in many points, our *Differences* are near so wide

wide as they are sometimes represented, but that they might easily be made up with a little allowance to mens *Words* and *Phrases*, and the different *Methods* of deducing their Notions.

It would be perhaps no hard matter to make this appear in those *Controversies* that are so much agitated among us concerning *Faith* and *Justification*, and the *necessity of good works to Salvation*, and *Imputed Righteousness*, and the *difference between Virtue and Grace*; with some others, if this were a fit place for it. The difference that is among us as to these Points is possibly not much greater than this, that some men in these matters speak more clearly and fully; others more imperfectly and obscurely. Some men convey their sense in plain and proper words; others delight in *Metaphors*, and do perhaps too far extend the *Figurative* expressions of *Scripture*: Some reason more closely and upon more certain *Principles*; others possibly may proceed upon weaker grounds, and *misapplied Texts* of *Scripture* and discourse more loosely. But both *Parties* (especially the more moderate of both seem to drive at much what the same thing, though by different ways, as appears from this, that being interrogated concerning the *Consequences* of their several *Opinions*, they generally agree in admitting or *rejecting* the same.

But fourthly; another thing that would make for peace is this; Never to charge upon men the

Conse-

Consequences of their *Opinions* when they expressly disown them.

This is another thing that doth hugely tend to widen our Differences, and to exasperate mens spirits one against another ; when having examined some *Opinion* of a *Man*, or *Party* of Men, and finding very great *absurdities* and evil *consequences* necessarily to flow from it, we presently throw all those into the *dish* of them that hold the *Opinion*, as if they could not own the *one*, but they must necessarily own the *other* : whereas indeed the men we thus charge, may be so innocent in this matter, that they do not in the least dream of such *Consequences* ; or if they did, they would be so far from owning them, that they would abhor the *Opinion* for their sakes.

To give you an instance or two in this matter : It is a *Doctrin* maintained by some, That *Gods Will is the Rule of Justice* ; or that *every thing is therefore just or good because God wills it*. Those that are concerned to oppose this *Doctrin* do contend that if this *Doctrin* be true, it will necessarily follow, that no man can have any certainty of the *Truth* of any one *Proposition* that God hath revealed in *Scripture*. Granting now that this can by just consequence be made out, yet I dare say those that hold the foresaid *Doctrin* would be very angry, and had good reason so to be, if they were told that they did not, no nor could not, upon their *Principles* certainly believe the *Scripture*.

Some Men think that they can with demonstrative evidence make out, that the *Doctrin* of Gods *irrespective Decrees* doth in its Consequences overthrow the whole *Gospel*, that it doth destroy the nature of *Rewards* and *Punishments*, cuts the very *Sinews* of mens Endeavours after virtue ; makes all *Laws*, *Promises*, *Exhortations* perfectly idle and insignificant things ; and renders God the most *unlovely Being* in the world. Now supposing all this to be true, yet it would be a most unjust and uncharitable thing to affirm of any that believe that *Doctrin* (many of whom are certainly pious and good men) that they do maintain any such impious and blasphemous *Opinions* as those that are now mentioned.

The sum of all is, that a man may believe a *Proposition*, and not believe all that follows from it : not, but that all the *deductions* from a *Proposition* are equally true, and equally credible with the *Proposition* from whence they are deduced : But a man may not so clearly see through the *Proposition* as to discern that such *Consequences* are really deducible from it : So that we are at no hand to charge them upon him unless he do explicitly own them.

If this Rule was observed our Differences would not make so great a noise, nor would the *Errors* and *Heterodoxies* maintained among us appear so monstrous and extravagant ; and we should spare a great many hard words and odious appellations, which

which we now too prodigally bestow upon those that differ from us.

The fifth Rule is, to abstract mens *Persons* from their *Opinions* ; and in examining or opposing *these*, never to make any reflections upon *those*.

This is a thing so highly reasonable, that methinks no pretender to ingenuity should ever need to be called upon to observe it. For it seems very absurd and ridiculous in any *Argument* to meddle with that, that nothing concerns the *Question*. But what do *Personal Reflections* concern the *Cause of Religion* ? what ever it may be to the *Reputation* of an *Opinion*, I am sure it is nothing to the *Truth* of it, that such or such a man holds it.

And truly if men would leave this impertinence we might hope for a better issue of our *Religious Debates* : but whilst men will forsake the *Merits* of the *Cause*, and unmanly fall to railing, and disparaging *Mens Persons*, and scraping together all the ill that can be said of them, they blow the Coals of Contention, they so imbitter and envenom the Dispute, that it rankles into incurable distasts and heart-burnings.

Christians would do well to consider, that these mean arts of exposing *Mens Persons* to discredit their *Opinions*, are very much unworthy the *Dignity* of their *Profession*, and most of all misbecoming the *Sacredness* and *Venerableness* of the *Truth* they contend for. And besides, no Cause stands in need of them but such an one as is extremely baffled
and

and desperate; and even then they are the worst Arguments in the world to support it: For quick-fighted men will easily see through the Dust we endeavour to raise; and those that are duller will be apt to suspect from our being so angry and so wastish, that we have but a bad matter to manage.

We should consider that *Mens Persons* are *Sacred* things, that what ever power we have to judge of their *Opinions*, we have no authority to judge or censure *Them*. That to bring *Them* upon the Stage, and there throw dirt on them is highly rude and uncivil, and an affront to *Human Society*, and the most contrary thing in the world to *Christian Charity*, which is so far from enduring Reproaches and Evil speaking, that it obliges us to cover as much we can all the *Faults*, and even the very *Indiscretions* of others.

The sixth and last thing I shall recommend to you as an Expedient of *Peace*, is a vigorous pursuit of *Holiness*.

Do but seriously set your selves to be *good*: Do but get your *Hearts* deeply affected with Religion as well as your *Heads*, and then there is no fear but you will be all the *Sons of Peace*.

We may talk what we will; but really it is our not *Practising* our Religion that makes us so *Contentious* and *Disputations* about it. It is our *Emptiness* of the *Divine* Life that makes us so full of Speculation and Controversie: was but *That* once firmly rooted in us, these *Weeds* and *Excrescencies*

of *Religion* would presently dry up and wither ; we should loath any longer to feed upon such *Husks*, after we once came to have a Relish of that *Bread*.

Ah how little satisfaction can all our pretty *Notions* and fine-spun *Controversies* yield to a Soul that truly hungers and thirsts after Righteousness ? How pitifully flatly and insipidly will they taste, in comparifon of the Divine Entertainments of the *Spiritual* Life.

Were we but seriously taken up with the *Substantials* of our *Religion*, we should not have leisure for the *Talking Disputing Divinity* ; we should have greater matters to take up our Thoughts, and more Profitable Arguments to furnish out our Discourses. So long as we could busy our selves in working out our *Salvation*, and furthering the *Salvation* of others, we should think it but a mean Employment to spend our time in spinning *fine Nets* for the catching of *Flies*.

Besides this *Divine Life*, if it once took place in us, would strangely dilate and enlarge our hearts in *Charity* towards our *Brethren* ; it would make us open our arms wide to the whole Creation ; it would perfectly work out of us all that Peevishness and Sowness, and Penuriousness of spirit which we do too often contract by being addicted to a *Sect*, and would make us Sweet and Benign, and Obliging, and ready to receive and embrace all Conditions of men. In a word, it would quite swallow up all *Distinctions of Parties* ; and what
ever

ever did but bear upon it the *Image of God* and the *Superscription* of the Holy *Jesus*, would need no other Commendatories to our Affection, but would upon that alone account be infinitely dear and pretious to us.

Let us all therefore earnestly contend after this Divine Principle of *Holiness*; let us bring down *Religion* from our *Heads* to our *Hearts*; from *Speculation* to *Practice*: Let us make it our business heartily to love God and do his will, and then we may hope to see *Peace* in our days.

This, this is that that will restore to the World the Golden Age of *Primitive Christianity*, when the *Love* and *Unity* of the Disciples of *Jesus* was so conspicuous and remarkable that it became into a *Proverb*, *See how the Christians love one another*. This, this is that that will bring in the Accomplishment of all those glorious *Promises* of *Peace* and *Tranquillity* that *Christ* hath made to his *Church*: Then shall the *Wolf* dwell with the *Lamb*, and the *Leopard* lie down with the *Kid*: Then shall not *Ephraim* envy *Judah*, nor *Judah* vex *Ephraim*; but we shall turn our *Swords* into *Plough-shares*, and our *Spears* into *Pruning-books*; and there will be no more consuming or devouring in all Gods Holy Mountain.

I should now proceed to the second General Point in my proposed Method of handling this Text; viz. To set before you the very great *Engagements*.

gements and *Obligations* we have upon us to follow after the Things that make for Peace ; and that

1. From the *Nature* and *Contrivance* of our *Religion*.
2. From the great weight the *Scripture* lays upon this *Duty*.
3. From the great *Unreasonableness* of our Religious *Differences*.
4. From the very evil *Consequences* that attend them ; as 1. In that they are great *Hinderances* of a good Life. 2. They are very pernicious to the *Civil Peace* of the *State*. 3. They are highly *Opprobrious* to Christianity in general. And 4. and lastly, Very dangerous to the *Protestant* Religion, as giving too many advantages, and too much encouragement to the *Factors* of the *Papacy*.

But I have I fear already exceeded the Limits of a *Sermon*, and therefore shall add no more.

God open our eyes, that we may in this our day understand the Things that belong to Peace before they be hid from our eyes.

F I N I S.

